

Nadler Urges Rice to Investigate Secret Nuclear Programs in the Middle East

Thursday, 03 February 2005

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) yesterday sent a letter to Secretary of State Rice, asking her to investigate evidence of clandestine nuclear weapons programs being conducted by Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Secretary Rice is in Europe this week, discussing nuclear proliferation with key allies of the United States.

“It is imperative that Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia comply with their nuclear nonproliferation treaty obligations and agreements, and that the stability of the Middle East not be compromised,” Nadler wrote.

Recent reports indicate that the three nations may be pursuing weapons programs in violation of international treaties, in some cases with illicitly acquired nuclear materials.

“The nuclear ambitions of Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia require serious and immediate international attention,” Congressman Nadler said. “Secretary Rice should make this issue a priority as she meets with European leaders this week.”

The letter is cosigned by Congressmen Burton (R-IN), Crowley (D-NY), Markey (D-MA), Evans (D-IL), Meek (D-FL), Strickland (D-OH), Weiner (D-NY), Wynn (D-MD), Holden (D-PA), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Grijalva (D-AZ), Maloney (D-NY), Holmes Norton (D-DC), and Timothy Bishop (D-NY).

The text of letter follows.

February 3, 2005

The Honorable Dr. Condoleezza Rice

U.S. Department of State

2201 C Street N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

We are seriously concerned that Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia may be conducting clandestine nuclear weapons programs. As you know, A.Q. Khan, widely regarded as the father of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, confessed to having been involved in an international network of nuclear proliferation from Pakistan to Libya, Iran and North Korea. Nearly a year after A. Q. Khan’s arrest, secrets of his nuclear supermarket continue to unravel, revealing that A.Q. Khan and his network might have offered assistance in designing and building nuclear weapons to

Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

On November 25, 2004, the New York Times reported that A.Q. Khan visited 18 countries, including Syria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, either to buy materials such as uranium ore or to sell atomic goods. In an interview with the Jerusalem Post on January 1, 2005, former chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency Ephraim Halevy stated that he believes Syria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt might have acquired nuclear parts from A.Q. Khan. Two days later, the Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli military sources stated that, thanks to A.Q. Khan, one of those three Arab states now has the potential to achieve a "significant nuclear leap."

Additionally, other serious revelations suggest that Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia have secretly pursued nuclear weapons programs, including:

Egypt

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported in January 2005, that it has found evidence of Egypt's nuclear ambitions. The IAEA discovered that Egypt conducted secret nuclear experiments performed as recently as a year ago. Samples of the plutonium found in Egypt have now been sent by the IAEA to labs in Europe for analysis to determine how old the material is and where was it produced.
- During a Sino-Egyptian summit in February, 2001, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak signed a peaceful nuclear cooperation agreement with China. That same year, press reports indicated that China was helping Egypt mine uranium in the Sinai desert.
- The independent Center for Non-Proliferation Studies in Monterey, California, published a report in November 2004 stating that Egypt's "active nuclear research program and recent activities and acquisitions aimed at developing an independent nuclear fuel cycle could provide cover and opportunity for developing a clandestine weapons program."

Syria

- According to Western intelligence sources quoted by the Los Angeles Times in June 2004, A.Q. Khan visited Syria several times, and met secretly with senior Syrian officials in Iran.
- On September 16, 2004, John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control & International Security, testified that, "... we are concerned about Syria's nuclear R&D program and continue to watch for any sign of nuclear weapons activity or foreign assistance that could facilitate a Syrian nuclear weapons capability. We [the Department of State] are aware of Syrian efforts to acquire dual-use technologies that could be applied to a nuclear weapons program."
- According to a December 2001 unclassified Central Intelligence Agency report entitled "Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat Through 2015," Syria continues to promote nuclear, chemical and biological programs.

Saudi Arabia

- In September, 2003, the British newspaper The Guardian alleged serious efforts on the part of Saudi Arabia to acquire nuclear weapons.

- Saudi and Pakistani high-level defense officials have met repeatedly during the last several years, raising questions about the extent of Saudi-Pakistani cooperation in defense matters and possible clandestine nuclear cooperation.
- Saudi defector Mohammed Khilevi, who was First Secretary of the Saudi mission to the United Nations until July 1994, claimed that Saudi Arabia provided financial contributions to the Pakistani nuclear program.
- In October, 2003, the Washington Times cited Major-General Aharon Zeevi, a senior intelligence officer of the Israeli defense forces, alleging that the Saudis had gone to Islamabad with the intention of buying Pakistani warheads to be placed on Saudi land-based missiles.

We remain deeply troubled that Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia may be attempting to build clandestine nuclear weapons arsenals. In view of this, we request that the Department of State work with the appropriate international agencies to investigate and monitor their nuclear programs, and report back on their findings and preventive measures.

It is imperative that Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia comply with their nuclear nonproliferation treaty obligations and agreements, and that the stability of the Middle East not be compromised.

Sincerely,

[Signed]

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